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SUBJECT: SERBIA: REFUGEE COORDINATOR WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT: MAY 15
- MAY 23, 2008

UNHCR FINANCIAL WOES CONTINUE

11. (SBU) Budget and staffing cuts for 2009 continue to afflict The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Serbia. Representative Lennart Kotsalainen told refcoord May 15 he had reluctantly agreed to cut six local positions and one international post, per UNHCR Geneva instructions. He said he faced intense pressure to further cut national staff, which he will resist as long as possible. For the moment, he said he did not anticipate a reduction in the \$7-million operational budget for 2009, but expected to have to fundraise to fund certain activities, including the planned 2009 IDP re-registration (which awaits a go-ahead from the new Government of Serbia, once it has formed). In this vein, Kotsalainen said that he planned to invite UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Erika Feller to Serbia in mid-June, ahead of the June 24-16 protracted refugee situations-focused Standing Committee meetings in Geneva. If Feller accepts, Kotsalainen said a meeting with President Boris Tadic to discuss integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Serbia would be the highlight of her visit.

UNHCR ASKS DONORS FOR PROJECT-BASED FUNDING

12. (SBU) Durable solutions for displaced populations and an appeal to donors for project-based funding were principal themes of UNHCR's May 20 donor update conference. Representative Lennart Kotsalainen announced UNHCR would work with Serbia's government, as soon as it is formed, on a policy to allow local integration of IDPs in Serbia and IDP re-registration in 2009. To supplement core funding, UNHCR asked donor representatives for additional project-based assistance for social housing solutions for IDPs in collective centers (\$2.1 million) and for automation of remaining dislocated registry offices in Vranje, Nis, Jagodina and Leskovac (\$892,187). (USG earmarked funds for legal assistance enabled UNHCR to design and implement the initial phases of the project which digitized and automated access to the registry books from Kosovo Serb municipalities now housed in the so-called dislocated registry offices in Kraljevo, Krusevac and Kragujevac.) Kotsalainen said UNHCR would continue to focus on its prevention of statelessness and asylum building efforts in 2009. Representatives from Russia, Japan, and most European missions attended.

MUNTER